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ABSTRACT

Portfolio assessment is an effective means of evaluation that encompasses many products of the child. Portfolios can be used to form a total judgment of what is needed for the child's further growth, based on daily events of the classroom, without interrupting the class day. They also allow the teacher to know more about students, while developing the child's own self-assessment, which in turn encourages more discussion between teacher and student. Portfolio assessment was adapted to a preschool classroom in a university laboratory school. Each child was given an accordion-style folder. Portfolios were organized around four areas of development: physical development, social and emotional development, emergent literacy development, and logico-mathematical development. For each area there was a checklist, and evidence was included to back up the checklist. At certain points during the school year, the teacher met with each parent to discuss the portfolio, results, and goals for the child. The portfolio was sent to the child's kindergarten teacher as a record of what was accomplished in preschool. Portfolio assessment is a worthwhile endeavor with preschoolers, giving the children a foundation for making judgments about themselves and giving teachers useful information in the evaluation process. (An interest inventory and development checklists are appended.) (TM)

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YES, IT CAN WORK! :
PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT WITH PRESCHOOLERS

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For years educators have searched for the perfect assessment and evaluation tool. Over the last ten years with the widespread existence of whole language, integrated curriculum, multi-age classrooms, and the development of independent learners many of our assessment and evaluation tools do not hold up. This type of curriculum crosses the content area boundaries, stresses cooperative learning, provides for flexible increments of time and encourages higher order thinking skills. It is too complex for traditional assessment and evaluation techniques. We need to bridge the gap between instruction and assessment by finding a technique to measure not only what the learners know but how they use that knowledge. Assessment, according to the National Association of the Education of Young Children, should be based on the developmental progress and achievement of children. This assessment should be used to "plan curriculum, identify children with special needs, communicate with parents, and evaluate the program's effectiveness." (Bredekamp, 1987)

Additionally, assessment and evaluation should be an ongoing part of the program, not something that interrupts the process. Everyday products of the children should be used for evaluation tools. Children should be involved in the evaluation process, also. If learners don't understand how to evaluate themselves they will always be dependent on some outside source to make that judgment for them. We have seen what happens to students who are dependent on teachers for grading their work. Many don't even attempt an enterprise until they ascertain if it is to be graded. We have the desire, as educators to move learners toward reflecting on their endeavors and changing their strategies to accomplish a task independently of constant attention by an instructor. Self-assessment is a step in the right direction. As

Farr and Tone (1994) assert, "The goal of education is to turn students into people who can continue to learn, so self-assessment is the essence of learning."

Objective standardized tests serve a valuable purpose in today's world but other techniques are needed to provide teachers with the information they can use on a daily basis to make curricular changes and aid each student in his/her personal growth as a learner. Portfolio assessment is such an option.

Portfolio assessment provides a broad and varied perspective. It encompasses many products of the child and these products can be used to form a total judgment about what a child needs to make further growth. These products are authentic and arise out of the daily happenings in the classroom. Portfolio assessment does not interrupt the class day; things accomplished during the class day are used in portfolio assessment. Portfolios allow for the teacher to know more about his/her students. It also encourages more discussion between the teacher and students about their products and processes, as well as, plans for improvement. It is obvious how much more beneficial this would be than handing back a paper with a grade that promptly finds its way into the trash can.

How to Use it With Preschoolers

Even though portfolio assessment is quickly becoming an assessment tool of choice for many elementary classroom teachers, especially language arts teachers, it has not been thoroughly adapted to preschool classrooms. Of course, in depth self-evaluation is an abstract idea for preschoolers. However, the author feels that as soon as a child begins to have an opinion about anything he/she can begin to make some limited judgments about progress.

Several faculty members involved with a university lab preschool and I decided to implement portfolio assessment with preschoolers. We knew it would be more

teacher centered than the elementary version because of the age of the learners. However, we felt it would give us a broader perspective about the child to form goals for his/her progress. It would also be handy when talking with parents about their children because the parents could actually see products of their children dated over time and make comparisons.

We decided to use an accordion style folder for each child. We wanted something that would be large enough to hold all the materials used for assessment yet one that had dividers to organize the materials for easy access. In order to set up criteria for each portfolio we needed to decide what materials should be included in each portfolio, what the materials would be used for, how the materials would be organized, who should have access to the information in the portfolio, and how we could draw conclusions about the material.

We decided to organize the portfolio into four sections centered around particular areas of development. There would be a checklist for each area and evidence to back up the checklist data would be housed in the section along with the goals that we set up for the child in the area. The areas are listed below along with the requirements for each section. The items on the checklists were based on information about child growth and development gathered from Bredekamp (1987) and Seefeldt and Barbour (1990).

General Section

1. An interest inventory (see example at end of article)
2. Conference/interview dates and results (parent and child interviews)
3. Background information on the child
4. A self-portrait of the child
5. Any data that do not fit in other categories

Physical Development

1. Physical Development Checklist (see example at end of article)
2. Evidence to back up checklist consisting of photographs, anecdotal records, and written products
3. Long-range and short-range goals for this area

Social/Emotional Development

1. Social/Emotional Development Checklist (see example at end of article)
2. Evidence to back up checklist consisting of photographs and anecdotal records
3. Long-range and short-range goals for this area

Emergent Literacy Development

1. Emergent Literacy Development Checklist (see example at end of article)
2. Evidence to back up checklist consisting of photographs, anecdotal records, taped retelling of favorite story, writing samples from journals, drawing samples, etc.
3. A list of books the child has had read to him/her over a period of time as well as a list of books the child can "read" him/herself
4. Long-range and short-range goals for this area

Logico-mathematical Development

1. Logico-mathematical Development Checklist (see example at end of article)
2. Evidence to back up checklist consisting of written products, anecdotal records, and photographs
3. Long-range and short-range goals for this area

In portfolio assessment children are at the center of the process. It is crucial that children begin to develop the skills of self assessment even in a preschool program. Of course, this is difficult to imagine, especially since we tend to play a care taking role when dealing with this age most of the time. Even so, we felt that the main goal of portfolio assessment is for children to get involved in reflecting on their life as soon as possible. We know that the four and five year olds can reflect in a small degree about their favorite stories, drawings, artwork, journal entries, structures they have made, physical feats they have accomplished, songs they have learned, and patterns they have made in the math/science center. So, we set up guidelines for reflection to be included in the interview section of the portfolio. We also included a section for interest inventories. In order to increase involvement of the children they were encouraged to decorate their containers for their own portfolio. The children enjoyed this experience and gained a sense of pride about their accomplishments.

At certain points in the year the preschool teacher met with each parent to discuss the portfolio and the results and goals set up for the child. Parental input is a necessity in the portfolio process. As teachers discuss the child with the parent they gain insight into parental concerns which may determine the best approach to take with the child.

We decided to keep the same portfolio for a child as long as the child is enrolled in the program. Twice a year the child's portfolio is updated and new goals are set. Some children are enrolled for three years. Periodically, we remove materials from their folders so that there will be enough room for other materials over time. Later, the portfolio is sent to the child's kindergarten or first grade teacher as a record of what the child accomplished while he attended preschool.

Portfolio assessment is indeed a worthwhile endeavor with preschoolers. It gives the children a foundation for making judgments about themselves and is useful

to the teachers in the evaluation process. It fits the curriculum and serves as an excellent way to involve parents in discussing their children's progress and learning goals. This is definitely a tool not to overlook with this age group.

INTEREST INVENTORY

Ask the child the following to determine his/her interests.

1. What is your favorite color? Why do you like it?
2. What is your favorite thing to do at AUM?
3. Who is your favorite person to do it with?
4. At home I like to eat . . .
5. My favorite TV program is . . .
6. Do you have a pet? What do you do with your pet?

Ask the child about the following to have him/her begin to reflect.

1. Show the child several drawings and as him/her which of the drawings do you like the best? Why?
2. Show the child several of his/her favorite books and ask: Which book do you like the best? Why? What part do you like? Why?
3. Show the child two or three writing samples and ask: As you look at these two papers you've written on, which one is better to you? Why?
4. What number can you count to now? Last time I asked you you counted to _____. How do you feel about this? Have you gotten any better? Why do you think so?
5. Show the child a photograph of something he/she has done or a product he has made. Ask the child if he likes it and why.
6. Talk to the child about something he has learned recently concerning his physical development. Ask him/her what he/she would like to learn next.

These questions are meant to guide you in leading the child to do some reflecting. However, feel free to add to these questions.

EMERGENT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Child's Name _____ **Date** _____ _____

Date of Birth _____

Skill or Behavior	Indicate by date behavior appears	Comments
Uses words to communicate ideas		
Speaks clearly		
Engages in conversations with others (complete sentences)		
Understands the use of household items		
Participates in dramatic play		
Plays pretend games		
Participates in oral language activities (singing songs, fingerplays)		
Enjoys listening to stories/books, etc.		
Names drawings		
Shows an interest in environmental print		
Demonstrates knowledge of how to handle a book		
Points to front of the book		
Points to title of book		
Turns pages left to right		
Notices pictures		
Points to print when "reading"		
Points to top and bottom of page		
Points to top left to begin "reading"		
Beginning to have one-to-one matching of spoken word to printed word		
Turns pages in order		
Relies on pictures to tell the story		
Relies on memory for text		

Demonstrates an interest in using writing for a purpose

- *Dictates to an adult about a drawing
- *Attempts to put some writing with drawings
- *Writes things for other people to "read"
- *Uses random letters to write
- *Uses initial consonant spelling
- *Prints horizontally across the page
- *Word boundaries apparent

Can name at least eight different body parts

Names basic colors

Names lower case letters

Names upper case letters

*Back up starred items with written products. Back up other evidence of accomplishments with photographs and anecdotal records.

LOGICO-MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Child's Name _____ **Date** _____

Date of Birth _____

Skill or Behavior	Indicate by date behavior appears	Comments
Recounts events of the day		
Uses "tomorrow" and "yesterday"		
Understands concepts:		
in front of		
behind, in back of		
beside		
over, under		
between		
Classifies objects into groups		
Orders objects by size		
Rote counts to _____		
Recognizes numerals up to _____		
Makes a one-to-one correspondence (up to 5 objects)		
Counts by touching objects up to _____		
Identifies shapes (circle, square, triangle)		
Builds structures with blocks		
Shows an interest in mixing ingredients		
Observes changes in the environment (weather, new furniture, etc.)		
Works with wood and tools		
Shows an interest in plants		
Shows an interest in animals		
Enjoys playing math games		
Respects living things		
Understands animal differences and likenesses		

*Back up evidence of accomplishments with photographs, anecdotal records, etc.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Child's Name _____ **Date** _____

Date of Birth _____

Skill or Behavior	Indicate by date behavior appears	Comments
<u>Gross Motor</u>		
Walks up and down stairs		
Walks up stairs one foot on each step		
Stands on one foot		
Can walk forward with eyes closed		
Can walk backwards		
Stands and walks on tiptoes		
Can climb ladder		
Can jump		
Can hop on one foot		
Can skip		
Can push wagon		
Can ride a tricycle		
Can walk a 4" balance beam		
Can kick a ball		
Can bounce a ball		
Can catch a ball		
Can throw a ball		
Keeps time with music by clapping, etc.		
<u>Fine Motor</u>		
Can button		
Can zip		
Can lace		
Can tie		

Can buckle
Threads beads
Can paint
Can build a structure with blocks
Can pour liquids
Can use scissors properly
*Can cut a straight line with scissors
*Scribbles with crayon or marker
*Imitates a horizontal crayon stroke
*Draws a circle

*Back up evidence of starred items with written products

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Child's Name _____ **Date** _____

Date of Birth _____

Skill or Behavior	Indicate by date behavior appears	Comments
Takes care of self physically		
Shows normal fears (dark, monsters)		
Remains involved until task is completed		
Demonstrates adequate attention span		
Works and plays independently		
Shows pride in creation and production		
Exhibits eagerness to explore		
Works and plays in group		
Responds to rights and feelings of others		
Takes care of own/others' materials		
Identifies self with children of same sex		
Solves problems with others verbally		
Beginning to understand rules to games		
Asserts independence ("Let me do it.")		

*Back up this checklist with evidence of accomplishments by photographs or anecdotal records.

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